to állo misó

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by FujinoLover

Summary

> “We were built in pairs, and when we get close to our opposites, we lose our power.”
>
> “Why?”
>
> “So we can live human lives. Love, connect, grow old, and die.”
>
> —*Hancock*, 2008

Margaret was first to be discovered.

It was not that human were not aware of their existence before, because they did. Different cultures called them with different names. *Gods*. *Monsters*. *Angels*. They were hunted, either out of fear or due to humans' greediness for their immortality and super strength. Thus most of them laid low until all of a sudden, they became the fancy *superheroes*.

Margaret was first to pledge loyalty to any government. She did it voluntarily, too. After the devastation left by the First World War, she wouldn't wait for the second one to end on its own. She had the power to end war for all sides with minimum casualty, but alas, she wasn't sent out. Instead, she was kept on a safe site, to be prodded and poked by a group of amazed scientists.

They tested her. They pushed her abilities to the max and she wasn't once harmed, not even a hair out of place. Only when they were sure she wouldn't break that they began to ask question—only one: *are there people out there like her?* She said she didn't know, couldn't remember anything beyond the summer of 1899 in Paris, and left them stumped.

Later on, a scan revealed a bullet lodged inside her brain. They had no idea how it got there in the first place or how to get it out, but the answer satisfied them. They were going to create a superhuman serum based on her, once they figured out a way to extract her blood since no earthly material was strong enough to pierce her skin. She let them do the thinking.

Margaret didn't tell anyone about Delphine.

There was an inside joke among the scientists involved in the Rebirth Project. God created Eve from Adam's rib. They created Captain America out of skinny Steve Rogers from Margaret's blood.

Margaret loved Steve. Loved Captain America. He was strong and loyal and righteous. Most importantly, he was not her pair.

With him, she could be strong—both of them could be strong together. They could help the world and did what they were supposed to do with their powers. With him, the world didn't seem so bleak anymore. With him, she could forget about the bullet in her skull and the hazy memory of her pair.

Her blood cost Steve his life.

1946 New York, Angie worked as a waitress on L&L Automat. Life had long ago become mundane for one like her. She stayed in one place as long as she could, until people began to question the constant youth clinging on her skin, then she moved to start over. Find a small apartment and a small job; look for a big dream in a big city. Always the same routine.

She had seen her Margaret with Captain America, fighting the war as she remained on the sidelines. She helped when she could, but she didn't want to be discovered. She was aware that Delphine was trying to find her as well, but she didn't want to meet her Margaret again, no matter how strong her yearning was. Not after she failed her and Helena.

Then one day, Peggy Carter walked into the automat and smiled at her. All curled hair and red lips and not a flash of recognition in her beautiful eyes.

Angie sneaked out from the backdoor then sent her resignation letter on the next day.

Sameen was the first to be modern day superhero, without the silly spandex costume and flowing cape. The United States' government acknowledged her as their agent whenever she was on their land. The Northern Lights Project funded her; fixed the collateral damage she left on her wake and paid for her food bills that somewhat exceeded the former's cost. She is a hammer, she smashed things. She had a quick metabolism to match.

But there had been Root, a fulltime hacker who was sometimes a superhero and sometimes villain and sometimes Sameen's lover.

Root, who did things for fun (not Hannibal's kind of fun). Root, who had lived as long as Sameen did. Root, who was Sameen's pair.

Delphine was lost in science. The Black Death had ripped Leda from her during the medieval age. Unlike in fairytale, a kiss from true love didn't fix physical illness or undo a curse. Leda was stubborn, even after her health distorted; she refused to let Delphine leave to claim their immortality. When they did part, it was all too late. Death came and went, still Delphine didn't despair.

Hundred of years later, with Leda's blood kept safe in a vial and advanced technologies, Delphine had means to bring her back. She founded Topside and started project LEDA. A couple more decades meant nothing for someone like her. She watched them grow from tiny embryos to full grown women and men—Beth, Sarah, Helena, Alison, Rachel, Tony, Krystal, and more scattered around the world. Then there was Cosima.

The same toothy grin and inquisitive eyes and curiousness as Leda. Delphine used every string to steer Cosima to DYAD. But she was flawed, she had a defect and she was dying too fast.

“This is your design.” Will looked over the medical reports strewn over the desk. He understood only a bit of them, but Delphine’s emotions were hitting him waves after waves even though she was sitting on the other side of the desk with bowed head. He continued nonetheless, “You made them this way.”

Delphine stared down at the papers, eyes laden with regret. When she started the project, she didn’t want to bestow Leda’s children with the same curse that they had. She took away their immortality. Now her selfishness was going to rob her of Cosima. She bit hard on her bottom lip. It didn’t draw blood, the skin remained intact. She was perfect, Cosima wasn’t.

Sameen never really liked Root. Too cheerful, too unpredictable, too beautiful. Too everything.

Their condition was a curse, she decided sometime during the Ice Age after almost having her toes chopped off due to frostbite (she swore to never let Root talked her into having sex in an ice cave ever again). They were drawn to each other, yet they negated each other’s power. They weren’t supposed to be called a pair, or star-crossed lovers, or anything else human came up with through the evolution of their intelligence. If anything, they were destructive for each other.

Still, Sameen sought for Root.

It was the attraction she couldn’t escape from. Their reunion was a dare to fate, to anyone who was trying to kill them. They met in the open. Their rendezvous made into international news. Root earned various scars from the assassination attempts at herself during those times. She bore some as well. It didn’t stop them.

Because with Root, she was mere human. With Root, every breath and every beat of the heart became precious. With Root, she bled.

(Root was more than happy to bring the blade.)

Steve Rogers was alive. An agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. came to inform Peggy before the news broke to public, sucking her back into a life she had long moved past. She was there when he woke up, not by his side like she would like to, but she understood the precaution. All went

up to the wind when he broke through the facility and she ended up giving him a chase. A familiar face in a strange world. No one bat an eyelash when they kissed in the middle of the crowded Times Square.

They had their promised dance about a week later and another kiss to close the night, but his heart was somewhere else as was her mind. He noticed her pauses, the scrunching of her brows, and the way her reaction was delayed whenever anyone called her name.

He then introduced her to Jessica Jones, a powered P.I. whose power sourced from experiment done on her, just like his. There were many powered people nowadays, villains and heroes alike. Jessica seemed disinterested with her. She called her an *old god* and Peggy couldn't find the insult in the term. Even so, she tracked someone who might help her. A powered government-agent acquaintance of hers, who she had shared a few drinks in bars, she told Peggy when she brought her to meet one enigmatic Sameen Shaw.

Peggy didn't get the chance to ask anything before she was turned down. *You find the wrong person*, Sameen had said then. Her loyalty lay on the other side, the side that didn't want Peggy to remember. But she had to—she *needed* to, before what was left of her vague memories was gone. With Jessica's help, she found another one who was just like Sameen and herself, although he wasn't necessarily the right person either.

Peggy would rather stab herself on the eye than asking help from one Doctor Lecter. In fact, she would love to stab *him* on the eye. The amount of crimes he had committed and the people who had fallen onto his dining table made her sick. She couldn't kill him, though. For the moment, she needed his expertise more than she wanted him dead.

"I want to remember," she said, ignoring his knowing smile and the fact that she was in his domain. He wouldn't be able to hurt her physically, but mentally she was already in pain. As time progressed, she forgot a lot of things. It might have something to do with the recurrent headache she had been suffering for decades—one she sometimes knew the reason of. Her eyes lost their usual fierceness, they were pleading instead. "Make me remember."

Hannibal didn't ask what was in it for him. When he did something that didn't gain him direct advantage, he did it out of curiosity. He wanted to see what Margaret would do once she gained her lost memories, once she remembered about her pair. If they reunited, he might enjoy a rare delicacy soon.

"Do you trust me, Margaret?"

It took her a moment to remember that he was addressing her, that *Margaret* was her birth name, and she whispered a weak *no*. "Yes," she said out loud instead.

"Up to me," Sameen said between munch, the remaining steak stabbed on the tip of her pocket knife. She was being rude and there was nothing her guest could do about it. "I'd

leave the two of you on the bottom of the ocean."

Hannibal sat up on the metal slab, disoriented for a good second. "Sameen," he croaked as he studied his surroundings. An abandoned CDC's quarantine room, no doubt courtesy to one Jessica Jones. "How's my protégé?" He kept his feet up and dry, although it wouldn't stop the electricity zap from transferring through the slab. While it wouldn't kill him, it would leave him feeling like his heart was going to explode. He was aware of how much Sameen enjoyed playing with electric shock. "It feels like yesterday when I mentored Samantha in her final year to be a psychi—" The zap hit and shook his whole body before he could finish his sentence.

Sameen's expression remained unchanged. "Her name is Root," she said.

"I apologize," he managed to choke out between wheezes. He didn't mean the apology, Sameen knew it. Unlike him and Root, she wasn't fond of mind games and he used the knowledge to annoy her. "I take that Root is the one who made you save me?"

Sameen rolled her eyes. "You almost killed her." She was well aware that Root was insane, but she hadn't known how far it went until she found out that Root had deceived Hannibal to find his pair's whereabouts years ago. Her plan had succeeded, then everything went to hell and Sameen woke up to a pain she had never experienced her whole life before. "We don't give a single damn about your sorry ass." She heard the clicks of heels coming behind her, but didn't turn to face the newcomer because she already knew who it was. "Someone else did."

"Hello, doctor Lecter." Angie placed a hand on Sameen's shoulder and sent a smile at Hannibal. "It's been a long time."

By then, Sameen had finished off her steak and wiped her knife clean. She stood up, putting the small weapon in the pocket of her jacket before putting it on. "Don't do anything I won't do," she said with a knowing smirk.

Angie returned the gesture in kind. Sameen wasn't worried about leaving the two of them alone because while Angie Martinelli was kind and harmless and bubbly, she was once Alex Udinov, who was deadly.

"You could have helped."

"Where's the fun in that?" Root grinned from her spot sitting on a tree's thick branch, swinging her long legs. "I know she will choose you over the world." She jumped off and landed on her feet, marking the ground from the sheer force. "She always chooses you, even over Christina."

“This world is not ours to own,” Myka said, keeping her chin up even though the weight of guilt remained hanging on her shoulders. “I did what I had to do, *Tracy*.”

Instead of *you’re just angry Helena forced your hand to have a miracle baby*, Root pouted at the use of the name. After her fallout with Hannibal that rendered her deaf on her right ear, Sameen had pretty much drugged and dropped her on Warehouse 13’s door. In panic for finding one of her kind in her supposedly-secret workplace, Myka had claimed that Root was her younger sister, Tracy, in front of her coworkers. The cover stuck longer than Root would like it to be.

Root looked older than the last time they met that she could no longer pass as Myka’s younger sister. Myka envied the faint lines on the corners of her lips and eyes, crinkling whenever she smiled at her. It taunted and reminded her that among those who were left of them, Root and Sameen had the healthiest relationship. Despite their many shortcomings, they were growing old together in their own pace.

“Time to go.” Root’s playful demeanor vanished in an instant and Myka raised a brow at the sudden change. “She said we have a bigger problem.”

“Sameen?”

“No,” Root said with a tilt of her head.

This time it was Myka’s turn to bite back the *how could Sameen agree to implant such thing in your head?*. She wasn’t the best when it came to relationship, not when she still could feel the barrel of the gun pressed on her forehead. “What did it say?” she asked instead.

“It’s good that Helena is detained at the moment.” That only confused Myka further. So Root added, “Delphine found a cure for her little experiment.” Myka nodded, prompting Root to continue because that was a good thing, but she still couldn’t grasp what that had to do with Helena. “She said it might also be used to severe our connection.”

Myka blanched then. Helena could never hate her, not even after Christina, but she didn’t trust herself anymore. For years she had hid right under Myka’s nose in the bronze sector of the Warehouse. It was punishment enough for both of them. When Myka found out and de-bronzed her, Helena’s grief turned into hatred. She was tired of this static world, of her life. If she knew now there was a way to end their entangled fate, if she died, then Myka would too and it had nothing to do with them being a pair.

Root watched the emotions swarming on Myka’s face. Realization, worry, pain. When it settled on determination, she said, “Stay with her, an old friend might be looking for her soon.”

Myka was gone before Root even finished her sentence, leaving dent on the ground and dust on her wake.

If there was anyone amongst their kind that Root would love to kill, it would be Will. He and his boyish charm and his dog-hoarding and the night he once spent with Sameen—*her* Sameen. Aside from the fact that they were barren unless they stayed human (and thus with their pair), the duo made quite the perfect couple: an empath and a sociopath. It didn't stop Root from wanting to castrate him decades after the fact.

"Where is she?"

Will jumped at the voice. His eyes met Root's for a split second. "New York?" On his lap, Winston lifted his head up and when he smelt Root, he returned to his previous position.

If Will hadn't casted his gaze down to Winston, he would have seen Root's annoyance. Of course she knew where Sameen was. She had to. They couldn't chance being on the same place at the same time without prior agreement. Communication was the key to a successful relationship, especially when it was their lives at stake.

"I wasn't talking about Sameen."

The closer she got to Will, the clearer the scar on his cheek became. It was healed, like the rest of the injuries on his body. They began the healing process pretty quick in the absence of their pair and distance only made them stronger. Too bad for him, he had stayed too long with Hannibal after the fall, so his wounds had scarred over. She didn't pity him for his loss.

"Where's Delphine?"

"She wasn't here when I woke up." Will frowned when he picked up Root's distress. "What's going on?"

Root already turned on her heel and made way to a nearest exit, which happened to be a glass door leading outside. "She found a way to mess with our immortality," she said without looking back as she slid the door open. Being the head of DYAD had its perks, like living on the top of its headquarter with free access to the helipad. "And Hannibal sent Margaret to—"

Will grabbed her arm before she could move through the threshold. "She shouldn't do that." He dropped his hold and took a quick step back before she could fling him off. They were, after all, bestowed with super strength and without their pairs being present, they were both on equal ground. Their eyes met, his filled with pure terror. "Hannibal can't live forever."

Root sighed, feeling like an unpaid relationship counselor, but she understood. *Can't live with him, can't live without him*. It was a sentiment all of them shared about their pairs, the reason they hadn't gone extinct for so long. "Go to New York and keep him there." She pinned him down with a glare, this time he didn't look away. "Stay away from Sameen."

Peggy tracked Doctor Delphine Cormier to an island. *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, based on the book by H. G. Wells. She knew her—him—*her?* She shook her head, trying to clear the muddled images of scattered papers, ink dark hair, and arrogant smirk accompanying every tales of farfetched future and head-spinning inventions over the afternoon teas and scones. She concentrated back on Delphine, the last thread to her pair. She had forgotten about the doctor for the last fifty years and that angered her.

She stopped short at the skirt of the village, not out of fear but due to a long lost sense of familiarity washing over her. She had been here before. It wasn't this crowded back then. The buildings weren't this advanced, but the house up there—she was there overseeing its building, even though Delphine insisted that she had to rest more because there was still a bullet in—she winched, cradling her head with one hand—her brain. She didn't need to remember that.

There was an old man living in the house. They had put him there. A fake. A mirage for distraction from the real thing. Just like Helena did and she would be proud of what they—*who the bloody hell was Helena?* Peggy shook her head again. Before she could step out of the shadows of the woods, someone blocked her way.

"Agent Shaw?"

Sameen said nothing. Her stance was relaxed, but she was ready to stop Peggy from going any further. Peggy looked around and found nothing in her immediate reach that she could use as distraction. She was never much of a fighter, hadn't been one for a long time. Before she could consider uprooting a nearby tree and throwing it to Sameen, someone else arrived and everything seemed to freeze for her.

"Margaret—" Angie started, reaching out to touch Peggy's hand. There was no electricity, no sudden rush of memories, but for the first time in decades, Peggy felt at home. "English?" She squeezed the hand intertwined with hers. "Do you remember me?"

Peggy furrowed her brows.

Sameen rolled her eyes. "Okay, that's enough." She marched forward and injected a stunned Peggy with a large dose of tranquilizer.

Angie was quick to catch the unconscious woman. "How much did you give her?" she asked.

"Root said it's enough to stop a bull." Sameen shrugged before taking Peggy into her arms. She slung her limp form over a shoulder as Angie had rendered powerless in the presence of her pair. "Brain surgery, medieval-style. Awesome," she said as they began the long track to the house on the hill.

"Can you hear me?"

Margaret groaned. Her head felt like it had been cracked into two and then put back together with super glue. Opening her eyes a bit, she was met with bright light and groaned some more. A familiar face loomed over hers a moment later.

“Maggie, can you hear me?”

This time, Margaret grumbled with a glare. “Stop calling me that, Sam.” Maggie, Peggy—it made sense at last.

“Only if you call me Root.”

Margaret didn’t have the slightest idea of what Samantha was talking about, but she nodded nonetheless. The motion only worsened her headache and she was being attacked by the light again without Root shielding her. She rolled to her side, away from the evil light, and saw another person in the room.

“What are you both doing here? You aren’t supposed to be together.”

“Oh, she remembers,” Sameen quipped in a deadpanned tone. She would have tested Margaret’s pupils’ response, but didn’t think it would be appreciated after having her skull sawed open a few hours ago, so she settled on questioning. “Can you tell us your pair’s name?”

“Angela.” The answer came easy. Margaret blinked. Realization hit her and she sat up in a jerk. “Where is she? What happened with Christina?”

It was early summer. Myka had wanted to spend it with Helena, but her relationship with Christina had always been strained. Myka didn’t hate the child, she was innocent after all. It was the trickery that surrounded her conceiving that left Myka feeling indifferent. Margaret and Angie then invited Christina to join their vacation in Paris instead. They were supposed to keep her safe. They were robbed. Together, they were powerless against guns.

Sameen and Root exchanged a look that Margaret didn’t like. The former shrugged, the latter sighed. “Angie left after your surgery. We can help setting up a meeting once you’ve fully recovered,” Root said. She waited until Margaret nod her acknowledgement on how their healing ability worked. The next was harder to tell. “Christina’s dead.”

Margaret had figured out as much, but still, she gasped. “And Helena?”

“Myka’s keeping her contained,” Root said. She took a moment to consider what she was going to say next, whether it would aggravate or sooth Helena. Margaret was Helena’s best friends long before and in a bleak, unchanged world, the emergence of an old friend might help. “But you can meet her if you want.”

“Did Helena—did she...”

Margaret swallowed, leaving the question hanging heavy on the air between them. She knew how rage could drive a person mad, of what could be done with their power, and how easy it was to tear a man limb by limb. Root only smiled. Helena had been too distraught with the

death of her daughter and Myka was desperate to hold the crumbling pieces together, but her Sameen was never one to be affected by feelings.

“Those men were taken care of,” was all Root said on the matter. “I think Helena would’ve wanted to thank you, for trying to protect Christina. Things sort of fell apart then, but it’s been over a century already, a lot of things have changed.”

“Not us,” Margaret said. “Nothing really changed for people like us.”

Not long after, The Machine tasked Root to get a sample of the cure. She had arranged a private research lab to do a thorough check. All Root had to do was deliver the sample, but she needed to get to Delphine first to do that. The doctor had kept herself scarce since the surgery ended, Root could only hope she didn’t get cold feet and run off with what was left of the cure. She had just said goodbye to Sameen and opened the door, intended to locate the missing woman, when she found her standing in the hallway.

Delphine offered her an awkward smile. “It’s all that’s left from Cosima’s treatment,” she said, handing off a small vial to Root and several papers scribbled with formulas. “I want to make more, for the rest of LEDA, but if what you’ve suspected is right, then everything better be destroyed.”

The items went to Root’s jacket pocket for safekeeping. Instead of letting Delphine enter the room, which didn’t seem like something she wanted to do, she tugged the door close behind her. “She doesn’t hate you.” Root had noticed the tension leaving Delphine the moment the door was opened and she saw that Margaret was fast asleep. “The Machine said she would have died if she reunited with Angie any sooner.”

Delphine nodded, instead of arguing that Margaret would die too if Angie hadn’t come forward and they couldn’t perform the surgery. After exchanging parting words with Root and gathering herself, she finally entered the room. Sameen hadn’t budge from her spot on the couch next to Margaret’s bed, despite the pull she must have felt while Root was leaving. They had grown used to it, no use of bending down on a whim and wasted useless time together.

“How’s our patient?” Delphine asked. She noted the way Sameen’s eyes focused on the bottle container she proffered. “That’s the bullet.”

“Exhaust herself with questions.”

Sameen lifted the bottle up to the light to study it. The metal inside rolled around, it was tiny. It wasn’t that small when they dug it out earlier. Margaret’s healing system had tried to absorb the foreign object and when it didn’t work, it got engulfed instead. Layer after layer was covering the bullet through the years. She had a ping pong-sized tumor in her brain and it was still growing, like the pearl inside a clam. If they hadn’t gotten it out, she would have

turned into a zombie until it grew enough to push her brain out of her ears and nose. Delphine hadn't appreciated Sameen's rather crude way of putting it, not when they had an unconscious Margaret on the operation table with her skull half off and a very pale Angie clutching her hand by her side.

"How's *your* patient?"

The smile on Delphine's face was the brightest Sameen had seen in a long while. She was *beaming*. "The cure—it works!" she said, enthusiasm pouring from every word. Sameen kind of expected her to start jumping and clapping her hands. She didn't. "Cosima is under observation, but the progress is very promising."

Sameen didn't mention about Leda's blood that Delphine had combined with her own and used to create the cure or Root's particular remark of *ichor* and how it was lethally toxic for mortal to consume. The Machine calculated that using the same template, with both pairs' blood, a way to severe a connection or a way to kill one of the pair could be created. Either one was not favorable when they had people like Hannibal and Helena among them.

For the moment, though, Sameen gestured for Delphine to take a seat beside her, so they could watch their slumbering patient together. They had just solved a century-old problem, saved two—three lives, including Helena because having Margaret back would really give her more will to live. They could do with a little quiet, and perhaps a bit of happiness, before another shit hit the fan.

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